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FIRE ONE



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No. 42—PHANTOM FORCE FIVE

**No. 43—THREE ... TWO ...
 ONE ... ZERO !**

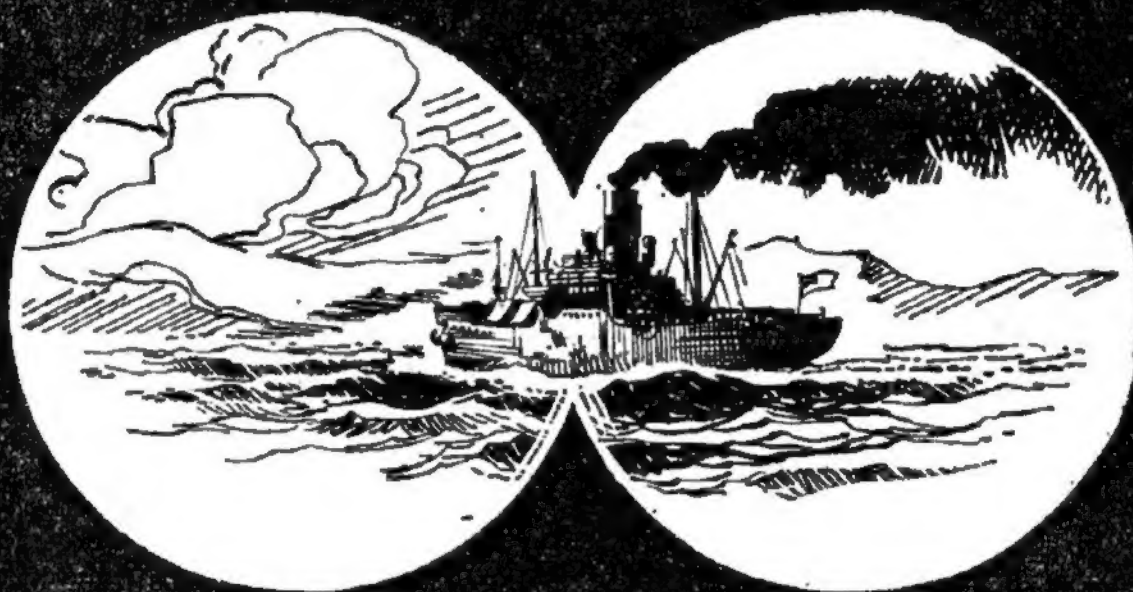
FIRE ONE

IN EARLY DECEMBER, 1941, THE CITY OF HONG KONG ON THE CHINESE MAINLAND WAS STILL IN BRITISH HANDS. THE RAPACIOUS BAYONETS OF THE JAPANESE INVADERS OF CHINA HAD NOT THEN REACHED THIS THRIVING COLONY. TO THE BRITISH NAVAL PATROLS, THE WAR SEEMED A LONG WAY OFF.

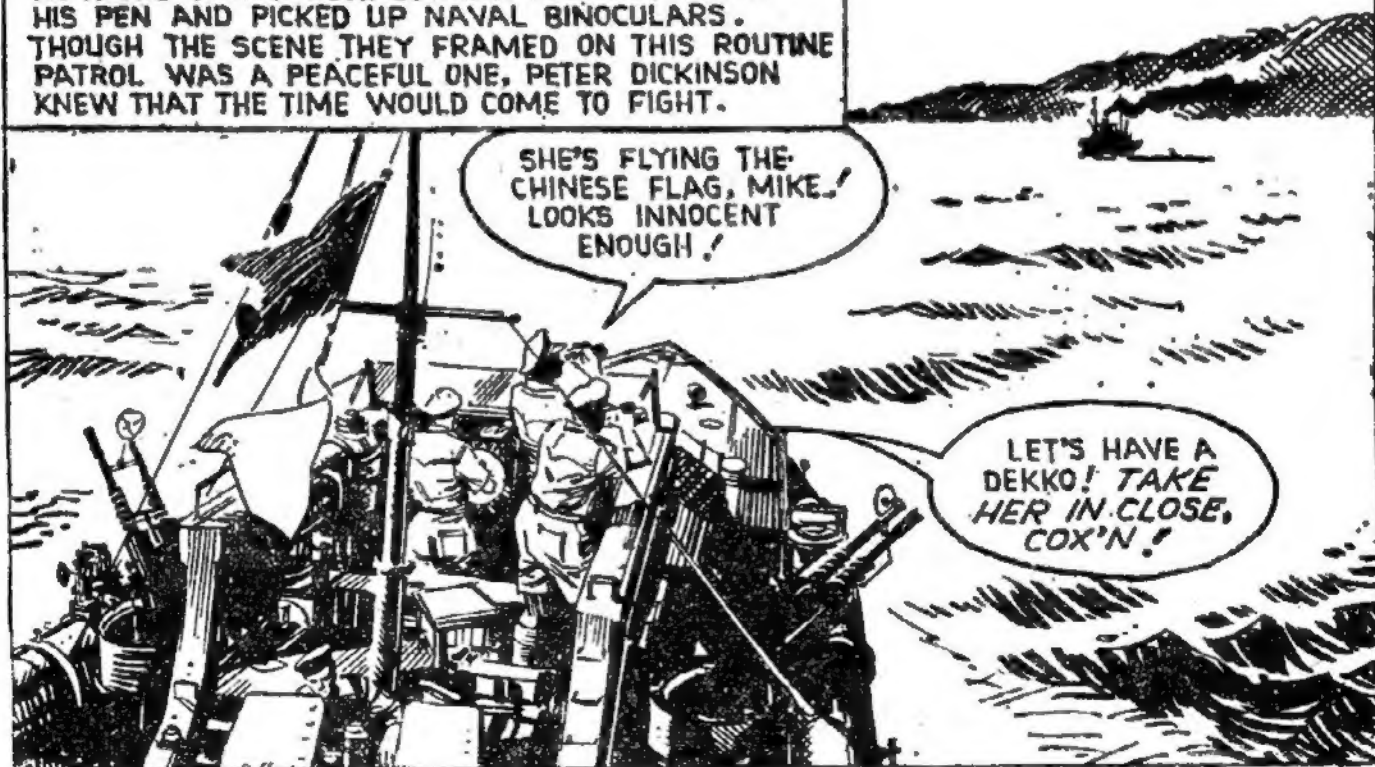


Chapter 1. TREACHEROUS INVADER

THE SEA DEFENCE OF HONG KONG AT THAT TIME WAS A SINGLE MOTOR TORPEDO BOAT FLOTILLA. ITS OFFICERS WERE ALL VOLUNTEERS: MEN LIKE YOUNG PETER DICKINSON, WHO, UNTIL THREE MONTHS, HAD WORKED IN A SHIPPING COMPANY IN THE BUSTLING CITY.



NOW THE YOUNG BUSINESSMAN HAD PUT DOWN HIS PEN AND PICKED UP NAVAL BINOCULARS. THOUGH THE SCENE THEY FRAMED ON THIS ROUTINE PATROL WAS A PEACEFUL ONE, PETER DICKINSON KNEW THAT THE TIME WOULD COME TO FIGHT.



THE EYES WHICH SCANNED THE OLD TRAMP STEAMER WERE WATCHFUL BUT UNSUSPICIOUS. THE HORRORS OF MODERN WARFARE HAD NOT YET BRACED THE AMATEUR SAILORS WHO MANNED THE HONG KONG FLOTILLA. BUT VERY SOON...



THE PUNY BRITISHER HAS COME NEAR ENOUGH, EH, COLONEL?

YOU MAY SINK HER, CAPTAIN! BUT DO IT QUICKLY! OUR MAIN ATTACK ON HONG KONG OPENS IN EIGHTEEN HOURS AND WE MUST NOT LET THE BRITISH HAVE WARNING OF IT!

THE INNOCENT-LOOKING STEAMER WAS A JAPANESE TROOP TRANSPORT. THE IMPERIAL ARMY WAS ALREADY MARCHING, HONG KONG, AND ITS BRAVE BUT UNTRIED DEFENDERS, WERE IN THE LINE OF FIRE.



RUM LOOKING BLIGHTER, ISN'T SHE, MIKE, WITH THOSE CANVAS SCREENS AMIDSHIPS?

MAYBE THEY'VE RIGGED UP AN OPEN-AIR BATH FOR THEIR PASSENGERS! OH WELL, IT'S NO BUSINESS OF OURS!

Fire One

THE M.T.B. SWUNG LAZILY DOWN THE STARBOARD SIDE OF THE TRAMP STEAMER. SUDDENLY A SHRILL VOICE BARKED AN ORDER IN A STRANGE TONGUE...



THE FIRST TREACHEROUS BURST OF JAPANESE FIRE CUT DOWN THE M.T.B.'S SKIPPER AND THREE RATINGS. DAZED BY THE VICIOUS SUDDENNESS OF THE ATTACK, PETER DICKINSON CROUCHED IN MOMENTARY BEWILDERMENT.

JAPS,
BY HEAVENS!
AND WE WALKED
STRAIGHT INTO
THEM!



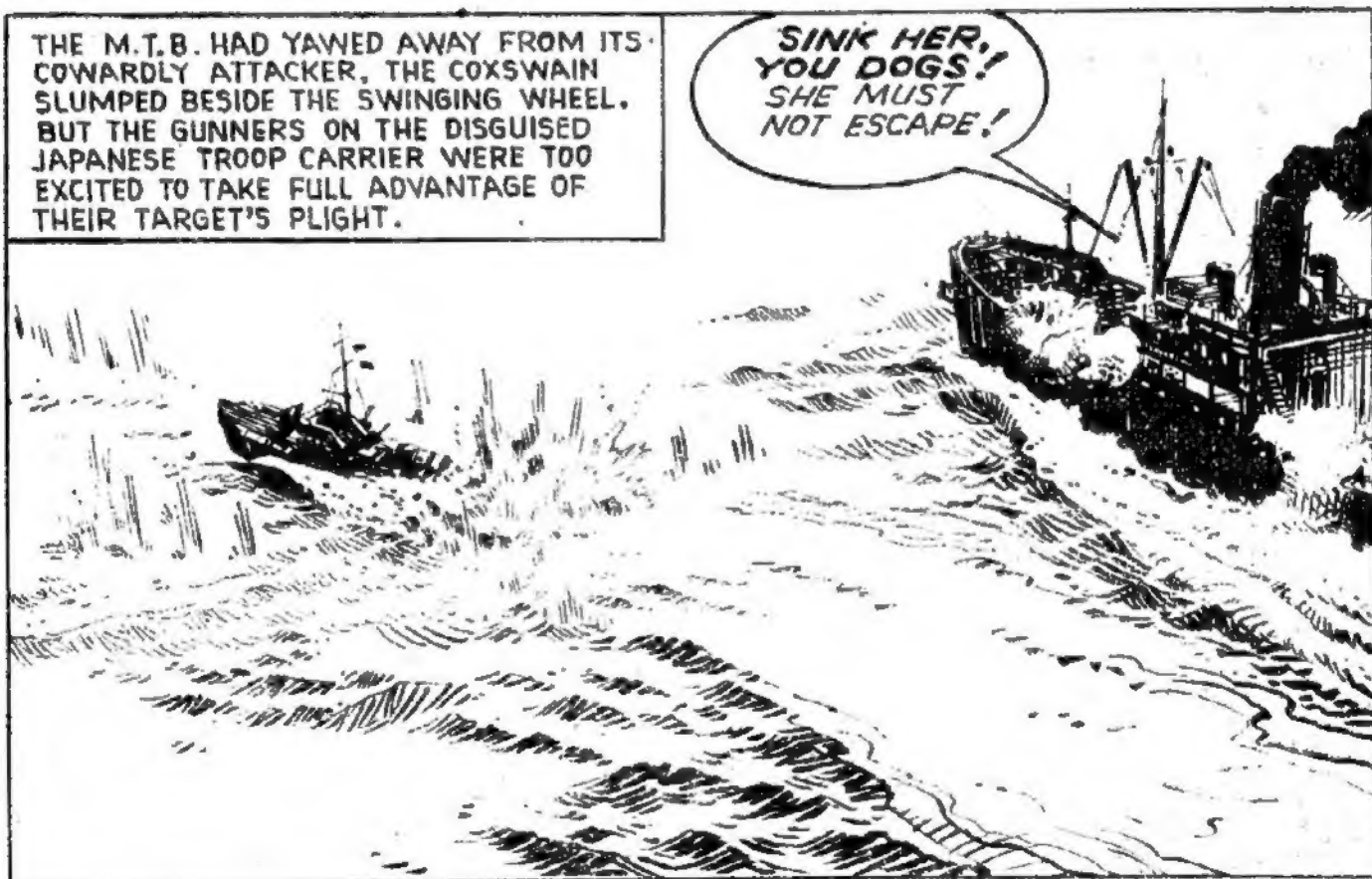
THEN GRIM ANGER CLEARED THE YOUNG OFFICER'S SHOCKED MIND, A SWIFT GLANCE ROUND THE SHATTERED BRIDGE SHOWED HIM WHERE HIS FIRST DUTY LAY...

THE WHEEL!
WE'RE A SITTING DUCK
UNLESS I CAN GET HER
UNDER CONTROL!



THE M.T.B. HAD YAWED AWAY FROM ITS COWARDLY ATTACKER, THE COXSWAIN SLUMPED BESIDE THE SWINGING WHEEL, BUT THE GUNNERS ON THE DISGUISED JAPANESE TROOP CARRIER WERE TOO EXCITED TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THEIR TARGET'S PLIGHT.

SINK HER,
YOU DOGS!
SHE MUST
NOT ESCAPE!



THE JAPANESE OFFICERS EXPECTED THEIR STRICKEN ADVERSARY TO FLEE
BUT ON THE BRIDGE OF THE M.T.B...

THEY'VE
CROCKED ME, PETER!
SHE'S ALL YOURS NOW!
WHAT ARE YOU
GOING TO DO?

SHE'S ANSWERING
HER HELM, SIR! IF IT'S
ALL THE SAME TO YOU,
I'M GOING BACK TO KNOCK
HELL OUT OF THAT
PHONEY JAP!



A COLD AND PURPOSEFUL ANGER AGAINST THE TREACHEROUS JAPANESE
FILLED PETER DICKINSON'S HEART. NOW HE WAS IN COMMAND OF
M.T.B. 54, AND THE JAPS SHOULD KNOW IT...

ALL RIGHT, MEN, WE'RE
NOT LEAVING THE SCORE
LIKE THIS! ARE YOU
WITH ME?

JUST GIVE US
A CRACK AT THOSE
HIPS, SIR, THAT'S
ALL!



THE M.T.B. SWUNG IN A WIDE ARC AND BEGAN ITS ATTACKING RUN FROM ASTERN THE TRAMP STEAMER. MOMENTARILY, THE JAPANESE FIRE SLACKENED AS PUZZLED YELLOW FACES WATCHED ITS SMALL AND BULLET-SCARRED ENEMY.



SUDDENLY THE KNIFE SHARP BOWS OF THE TORPEDO BOAT LIFTED THREATENINGLY AS ITS POWERFUL ENGINES SURGED. THAT MENACING BOW WAVE UNNERVED THE JAPANESE GUNNERS.



Fire One

M.T.B. 54 SLASHED INTO THE ATTACK WITH VENGEFUL GUNS BLAZING. SHE WAS SMALL, BUT HER HITTING POWER WAS FORMIDABLE. AS THE CRAFTY JAPANESE WOULD DISCOVER.

LET 'EM
HAVE IT, MEN!

AS THE RANGE CLOSED, A SHARP ORDER FROM LIEUTENANT PETER DICKINSON SENT A SLIM TORPEDO LUNGING ACROSS THE THIRTY YARD GAP BETWEEN THE TWO SHIPS...

THE WARHEAD OF THE TORPEDO SLAMMED BRUTALLY AGAINST THE TROOP CARRIER'S RUSTED IRON HULL...

SMACK ON,
SIR!

THE VICIOUS EXPLOSION FLUNG THE M.T.B. ON ITS BEAM AS IT RACED CLEAR...

WE'LL PICK UP A COUPLE OF JAPS FOR INTERROGATION, MEN! UNSHIP THE FLOATS FOR THE OTHERS! THE COAST IS ONLY TWO MILES AWAY... THEY'LL HAVE TO SWIM FOR IT!



THE TROOP CARRIER WAS MORTALLY STRICKEN. AS SHE SETTLED IN THE BOILING WATER, THE SMALL BRITISH WARSHIP SHE HAD STUNG TO DEADLY ANGER CLOSED IN ON HER KILL.

UP YOU COME, NIP! YOU'VE GOT SOME TALKING TO DO!



NOW THAT THE HEAT OF ACTION WAS OVER, THE BRITISH OFFICERS BEGAN TO WONDER ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THAT SHIP CRAMMED WITH JAPANESE TROOPS IN THESE HITHERTO PEACEFUL WATERS.

SHE'S GOING DOWN, MIKE!

GOOD WORK, PETER! I WONDER WHAT THE JAPS WERE UP TO?



ONE OF THE JAPANESE SURVIVORS SPOKE HALTING ENGLISH. HE WAS BROUGHT, DRIPPING AND HUMBLE, BEFORE THE TORPEDO BOAT'S FIRST LIEUTENANT...

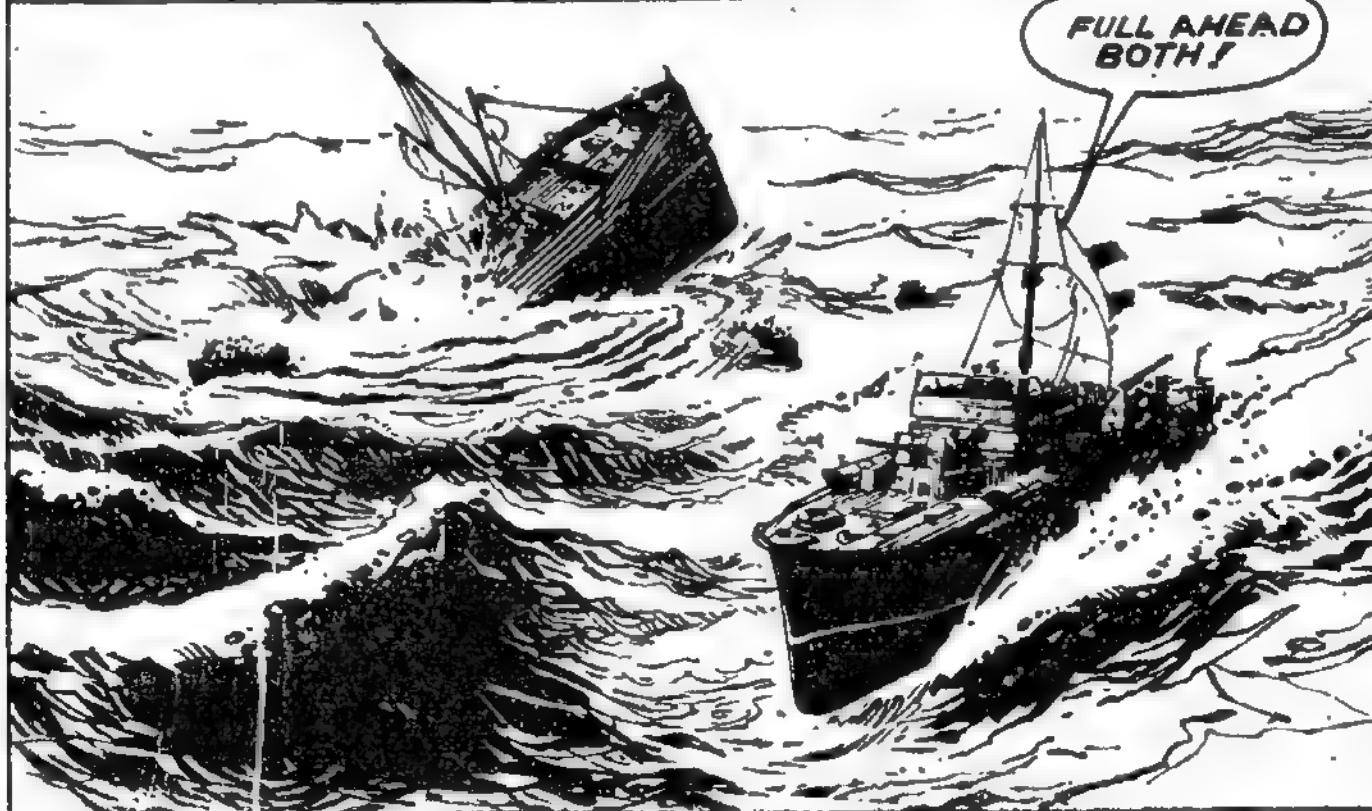
OUR OFFICERS TELL US WE ARE PART OF THE ATTACK ON HONG KONG... A SMALL PART ONLY, HONOURABLE SIR! WE WERE TO DISEMBARK AT NOON TOMORROW!

SO THE ATTACK'S COMING AT LAST! WITH OUR RADIO SHOT AWAY, WE'D BETTER MAKE TRACKS TO WARN THE COLONY!



THE LONG EXPECTED JAPANESE ATTACK ON HONG KONG WAS COMING AT LAST WITH A GRIM LOOK AT THE DOOMED JAPANESE TROOP CARRIER, LIEUTENANT PETER DICKINSON TURNED THE M.T.B. TOWARDS ITS VIOLENT DESTINY.

FULL AHEAD BOTH!



M.T.B. 54 HAD BEEN ON EXTENDED PATROL NORTH ALONG THE CHINESE MAINLAND. NOW, AT FULL SPEED, SHE HAD A TWELVE HOUR JOURNEY BEFORE HER. ON HER BRIDGE, THE TWO OFFICERS GRAVELY TALKED..

THOSE HONG KONG MERCHANTS LIKE YOUR MISTER PATTON AREN'T GOING TO LIKE THIS, PETER! THEY'VE BEEN MAKING FAT PROFITS LATELY!

THEY'LL HAVE TO FIGHT THE JAPS LIKE THE REST OF US NOW, MIKE!



WHEN WAR COMES TO A THRIVING MERCANTILE COMMUNITY, THE EFFECT IS CATASTROPHIC. BOTH PETER AND MIKE KNEW THIS, FOR, UNTIL RECENTLY, THEY HAD WORKED AS BUSINESS MEN IN THE CITY THEY WERE NOW TO DEFEND AS NAVAL OFFICERS.



Chapter 2.

SHOOT ON SIGHT

AT DAWN NEXT MORNING, THE GREAT CITY OF HONG KONG, WAS AWAKENING WITH ITS USUAL BUSTLE TO A NEW DAY... BUT ONE, WITH A TERRIBLE DIFFERENCE.

I'LL RECOMMEND THAT YOU TAKE COMMAND OF THE BOAT, PETER. YOU'D BETTER SEE THE C.O. RIGHT AWAY AND TAKE THOSE JAP PRISONERS WITH YOU!

AYE AYE, SIR!



WITHOUT WASTING TIME ON A WRITTEN REPORT, PETER DICKINSON TOOK HIS NEWS TO THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE THIRD MOTOR TORPEDO BOAT FLOTILLA. IT WAS NOT THE ONLY WARNING THE GRIM-FACED SENIOR OFFICER HAD RECEIVED.

YOUR REPORT TALLIES WITH THE OTHERS WE'VE BEEN GETTING IN THE LAST TWELVE HOURS, DICKINSON! THE JAPS ARE APPROACHING HONG KONG FROM THREE SIDES! IT'S NOT GOING TO BE PRETTY HERE WHEN THEY ARRIVE!

YOU MEAN WE'VE NO DEFENCES, SIR?



THE JAPANESE WERE BRINGING MASSIVE FORCES TO BEAR ON THE LIGHTLY-DEFENDED CITY. LIKE MOST OF THE BRITISH POSSESSIONS IN THE FAR EAST, HONG KONG WAS ILL-PREPARED TO WITHSTAND THE ATTACK OF A RUTHLESS ENEMY.

WE'VE GOT A FEW GUNS, A FEW SOLDIERS TO FIRE THEM - AND ONE FLOTILLA OF TORPEDO BOATS! WE'RE GOING TO NEED EVERY ABLE-BODIED ENGLISHMAN IN THE CITY! NOW I SUGGEST YOU GO ASHORE AND CLEAR UP YOUR AFFAIRS, LIEUTENANT, BEFORE THE PARTY STARTS!

AYE AYE, SIR!



GRIMLY, PETER DICKINSON SET OUT FOR THE SHIPPING OFFICE WHERE HE HAD WORKED UNTIL THREE MONTHS AGO. WITH THE ECHO OF VICIOUS GUNFIRE STILL IN HIS EARS, THE CIVILIAN BUSTLE OF THE STREETS SOUNDED QUEER.

THEY CAN'T HAVE HEARD THE NEWS YET ... OR ELSE THEY'RE ALL TOO BUSY TO BELIEVE IT!



THE OFFICES OF THE *PATTON SHIPPING LINE* WERE COOL AND PEACEFUL: THE SECRETARY GREETED HIM AS THOUGH HE HAD MERELY BEEN AWAY ON HOLIDAY. SURELY THEY COULD NOT HAVE HEARD YET OF THE IMMINENT JAPANESE ATTACK?

HALLO, MISTER DICKINSON! HOW NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MISTER PATTON WAS ONLY SAYING THIS MORNING HOW MUCH HE MISSES YOU!

BUSINESS IS GOOD, IS IT, NANCY? WELL, THE OLD MAN WILL SOON HAVE OTHER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT. IS HE IN?



HARRY PATTON, PETER'S OLD BOSS, WAS A TOUGH YORKSHIREMAN WHO HAD SPENT A LIFETIME OF TRADING IN THE FAR EAST. HE GREETED HIS EX-EMPLOYEE WARMLY.

PETER, MY BOY! JUST THE MAN I WANTED TO SEE!

I'VE GOT BAD NEWS FOR YOU, I'M AFRAID, SIR!



HARRY PATTON'S ONLY ANSWER TO PETER'S URGENT WARNING WAS A PLACID SMILE AND A PROFFERED CIGAR.

I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND, SIR. THE JAPS ARE LESS THAN THREE HOURS AWAY FROM HONG KONG. OUR DEFENCES ARE PRACTICALLY NIL.

YES, YES, PETER! WE GOT THE NEWS LAST NIGHT! NOW TAKE THE WEIGHT OFF YOUR FEET AND HAVE A CIGAR!



PETER STARED IN SHEER BEWILDERMENT AT HIS FORMER EMPLOYER. LESS THAN TWENTY FOUR HOURS AGO HE HAD BEEN FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE AGAINST A TREACHEROUS ENEMY, AND NOW...



DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT THE NEWS MEANS, SIR?

CERTAINLY I DO, MY BOY! THE JAPS WILL OCCUPY HONG KONG WITH A MINIMUM OF FIGHTING! THERE WILL BE SOME INTERFERENCE WITH BUSINESS, THE USUAL MILITARY RED TAPE AND IRKSOME CONTROLS AND WHEN THINGS HAVE SETTLED DOWN AGAIN, WE SHALL ALL GO ON WORKING VERY MUCH AS WE ARE NOW!

THE TOUGH YORKSHIREMAN HAD CRITICISED PETER WHEN THE YOUNGER MAN HAD VOLUNTEERED FOR THE NAVY SIX MONTHS AGO. HE JUST COULD NOT SEE THE NEED TO FIGHT THE JAPANESE INVADERS.

YOU MEAN YOU'RE NOT GOING TO FIGHT? WHEN WE NEED EVERY ABLE-BODIED MAN IN THE CITY TO STOP THE JAPS, YOU'RE GOING TO GO ON DOING BUSINESS?

WHY NOT, YOUNG MAN? I'M A BUSINESS MAN, NOT A FIGHTER!



PUGNACIOUSLY, HARRY PATTON TURNED ON THE YOUNG NAVAL OFFICER.

FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT! THAT'S ALL YOU YOUNG FELLOWS THINK OF! YOU TALK AS IF THE JAPS WERE SAVAGES! I'VE TRADED WITH THEM FOR THIRTY YEARS AND THEY'RE A CHARMING RACE! IT'S OUR JOB TO KEEP THE CITY WORKING NORMALLY, NOT TO SHED BLOOD UNNECESSARILY! I ADVISE YOU TO TAKE OFF THAT UNIFORM AND GET BACK BEHIND YOUR DESK!



IT WAS NOT COWARDICE WHICH LAY BEHIND THE BUSINESSMAN'S WORDS, IT WAS A LIFE-TIME'S CYNICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE VAGARIES OF POLITICS IN THE UNSTABLE EAST.

I'LL GO BEFORE I LOSE MY TEMPER, MISTER PATTON! I ONLY HOPE YOU FIND THE JAPS AS CHARMING WITH A BAYONET IN THEIR HANDS AS THEY WERE WITH A CHEQUE BOOK!

HOT YOUNG BLOOD ... THAT WAS ALWAYS YOUR TROUBLE, MY BOY! AH WELL, WE ALL LEARN IN TIME!



MORE SAD THAN ANGRY NOW, PETER DICKINSON CALLED A RICKSHAW AND ORDERED THE MAN TO TAKE HIM TO THE CITY'S RESIDENTIAL SUBURB. NOW HE WANTED TO COMPLETE HIS BUSINESS ASHORE AND GET BACK TO HIS SHIP.

THE OLD MAN'S WRONG... TRAGICALLY WRONG! WELL, I'VE DONE MY BEST TO WARN HIM!



THE RICKSHAW TRUNDLED THROUGH THE STREETS PETER HAD KNOWN SO WELL IN HIS CIVILIAN DAYS. NOTHING SEEMED TO HAVE CHANGED. IT WAS INCREDIBLE THAT TOTAL WAR WAS ONLY TWO SHORT HOURS AWAY.

PETER, IT'S YOU! THE NEWS IS NOT AS BAD AS THEY SAY, IS IT?

IT'S BAD, MRS. DALRYMPLE! I'VE COME TO COLLECT A FEW THINGS BEFORE THE BALLOON GOES UP!



PETER HAD LIVED WITH THE DALRYMPLES IN THE DAYS WHEN HE WORKED WITH THE PATTON LINE. MRS. DALRYMPLE WAS A MILD AND TIMID LADY WHOSE HUSBAND, A DOCTOR, SHARED THE SMUG CONFIDENCE OF THE BRITISH COMMUNITY IN HONG KONG.

THE JAPS WILL BE HERE IN ABOUT TWO HOURS, MRS. DALRYMPLE! HASN'T YOUR HUSBAND MADE ANY PREPARATIONS?

HE JUST TELLS ME TO KEEP CALM, PETER! THE PEOPLE AT THE CONSULATE WILL ACT FOR US, HE SAYS! OH DEAR, AND WE WERE SO HAPPY ALL OF US, WEREN'T WE?



PETER WAS FOND OF THE DALRYMPLES BUT THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD DO FOR THEM NOW. HIS JOB WAS TO FIGHT AND EVEN AS HE CAME OUT ON TO THE VERANDAH, CARRYING HIS GRIP...

HERE THEY COME... OLD PATTON'S CHARMING JAPS! I'M SORRY I CAN'T STAY, MRS. DALRYMPLE! MY PLACE IS ON MY SHIP!

OH, I SHALL BE ALL RIGHT, PETER! AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT MY HUSBAND TELLS ME!



AN HOUR BEFORE THEIR LAND ATTACK, THE JAPANESE SENT IN A SQUADRON OF HEAVY BOMBERS TO SOFTEN UP THE PRACTICALLY DEFENCELESS CITY. WITH APPALLING SUDDENNESS, PANIC SWEEPED THE CROWDED STREETS...



GRIMLY LIEUTENANT PETER DICKINSON HURRIED THROUGH THE HAVOC OF THE BOMBS TO HIS FIGHTING CRAFT, AND EVEN AS HE SET FOOT ON THE GANGWAY...



THE ORDER WAS TERSE AND TO THE POINT. PETER DICKINSON WAS SMILING WHEN HE REACHED THE BRIDGE AND GLANCED ENQUIRINGLY AT THE SLIM YOUNGSTER WHO WAS STANDING THERE.

MIDSHIPMAN DANVERS REPORTING, SIR! I'M YOUR SECOND-IN-COMMAND. COMMANDER ROBERTS SAYS HE'S SORRY, BUT I'M ALL HE CAN SPARE YOU!

WELL, I'M NOT SORRY TO HAVE YOU, SNOTTY! WELCOME ABOARD! TAKE A LOOK AT OUR ORDERS.

MIDSHIPMAN DANVERS' REACTION TO THE ORDER WAS THE SAME AS HIS COMMANDING OFFICER'S. PETER WARMED TO THE BOY AT ONCE. HE THOUGHT OF HARRY PATTON'S WORDS AND GRINNED.

'PROCEED TO KOWLOON BAY AND SHOOT ANYTHING IN SIGHT'!
I SAY, SIR, THAT'S THE SORT OF ORDER TO GET!

YOU THINK SO, DO YOU, SNOTTY? SO DO I! WELL, SIXTY-SEVEN'S ON HER WAY, LET'S GET STARTED!

Chapter 3. PHANTOM FLOTILLA

WHAT THEY WOULD FIND IN KOWLOON BAY, PETER DID NOT KNOW. HE GUESSED THAT THE JAPANESE HAD OCCUPIED THAT PART OF THE CITY IN THEIR FIRST ONRUSH, AND THAT LANDING CRAFT WOULD BE BRINGING THE SECOND WAVE OF TROOPS IN.



TOGETHER, THE TWO M.T.B.'S SWEEPED OUT OF THE NAVAL DOCKYARD AND HEADED TOWARDS KOWLOON. THE TINY ROYAL NAVAL FORCE, MANNED ENTIRELY BY VOLUNTEERS, WAS NOT GOING TO GIVE UP THE GREAT CITY WITHOUT A FIGHT. THIRTY MINUTES LATER...



THE LOOKOUT'S WARNING BROUGHT THE BINOCULARS TO PETER'S EYES. HIS GUESS HAD BEEN RIGHT... A STRING OF JAPANESE LANDING CRAFT WERE HEADING IN LINE AHEAD ACROSS THE BAY TOWARDS TAIKOO.



THE ATTACK ON THE LANDING CRAFT, ASSUMING THE JAPS HAD OCCUPIED THE SHORES OF THE BAY, AND BROUGHT UP THEIR HEAVY GUNS, WOULD BE HAZARDOUS IN THE EXTREME. BUT PETER'S EYES SHONE AS HE GAVE HIS ORDERS..

HEAD FOR THE ENEMY, ROGERS!
CLOSE UP TO ACTION STATIONS!
HERE WE GO!



THE JAPANESE SOLDIERS IN THE LANDING CRAFT HAD BEEN ENJOYING THEIR PEACEFUL TRIP ACROSS THE SUNLIT BAY. THE SHORES WERE ALREADY OCCUPIED BY THEIR TROOPS AND THEY ANTICIPATED NO DANGER. BUT SUDDENLY...



THE TWO BRITISH TORPEDO BOATS KNIFED TOWARDS THEIR PREY AT FORTY KNOTS. ONE ON EITHER SIDE OF THE LINE OF LANDING CRAFT, THEY CLOSED IN FROM ASTERN AT POINT BLANK RANGE...

BLIMEY!
THE TARGET'S
NEAR ENOUGH!



PETER DICKINSON'S HAIR-RAISING TACTICS WERE COLDLY CALCULATED. A TORPEDO BOAT AT FORTY KNOTS CREATES A VICIOUS WASH, AND THE LANDING CRAFT WERE UNWILDEY, FLAT-BOTTOMED BOATS.



THE SHARP-EDGED WAKE WHIPPED BACK FROM THE M.T.B.'S COUNTER AND SLAMMED THE FLIMSY LANDING CRAFT LIKE A GIANT HAMMER.

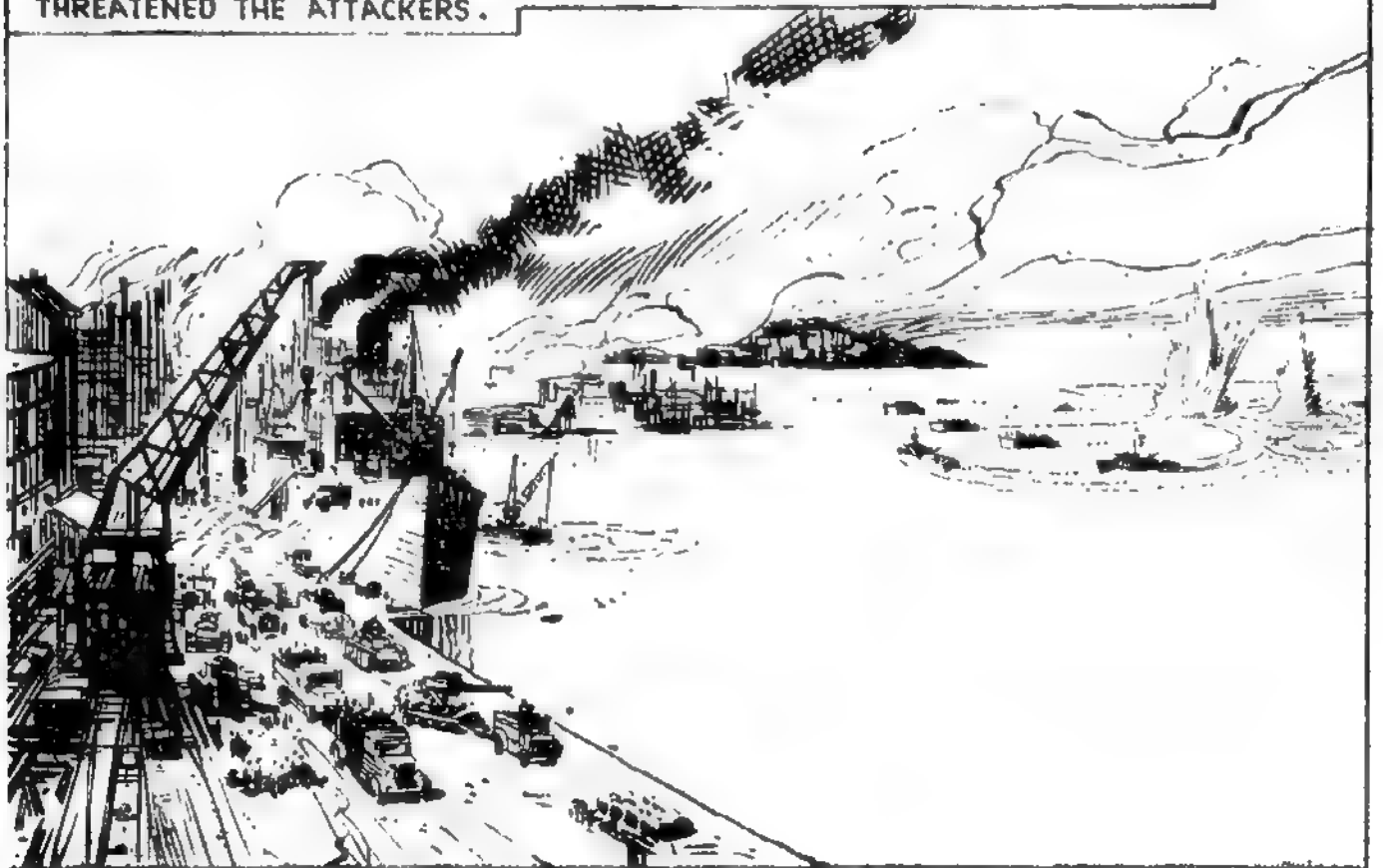
MOUNT DEPTH CHARGES! STAND BY TO DROP!



PETER DICKINSON HAD BEEN ORDERED TO SHOOT ANYTHING IN SIGHT. NOW A QUICK ORDER HAD SENT TWO MEN TO THE DEPTH CHARGE THROWERS IN THE STERN. A NEW TERROR STRUCK THE JAPANESE FORCE.



THE LINE OF LANDING CRAFT HAD DISINTEGRATED UNDER THE MERCILESS ATTACK OF THE TWO BRITISH TORPEDO BOATS. BUT ALREADY THE ENEMY-OCCUPIED SHORE WAS WITHIN MACHINE-GUN RANGE AND A NEW PERIL THREATENED THE ATTACKERS.



THE JAPANESE OFFICERS ASHORE HAD WITNESSED THE SURPRISE ATTACK OF THE TWO BRITISH M.T.B'S IN THE BAY. NOW THEY GAVE ANGRY ORDERS.



MACHINE-GUNS WERE HURRIED TO THE DOCKSIDE. A TRAILER-MOUNTED HOWITZER ADDED ITS HEAVY FIRE POWER. BUT THE TORPEDO BOATS PRESENTED AN ELUSIVE TARGET.



THE AMATEUR-OFFICERS ON THE BRITISH WARSHIPS WERE ENJOYING THEMSELVES. THIS WAS WHAT THEY HAD TRAINED FOR THROUGH MANY WEARY MONTHS WHEN THEIR FELLOW-CIVILIANS WERE SNEERING AT THEM.

THE NIPS ARE
GETTING CROSS,
PETER!

WE'LL GIVE THEM
SOMETHING TO GET
CROSS ABOUT,
SAM!

AT LAST ONE OF THE JAPANESE QUICK-FIRING GUNS
MOUNTED ON THE DOCKSIDE TRAVERSED THE
FLEETING TARGET.

BANZAI,
A HIT!



A WOUNDED GUNNER WAS HURRIED BELOW TO THE DUBIOUS SAFETY OF THE CREW'S QUARTERS. UNDAUNTED, M.T.B. 54 SWEEPED ON...

THEY'VE HIT US, SIR!

THEY'LL HIT US AGAIN, SNOTTY, BUT NOT BEFORE WE'VE HIT THEM SOME, STAND BY TO RAM!

THE SECOND STRING OF JAPANESE LANDING CRAFT HAD HUDDLED TOGETHER IN A PANIC-STRICKEN ATTEMPT AT DEFENCE. LIKE WOLVES, THE TORPEDO BOATS LUNGED DOWN ON THEM...

AAGH! THEY WILL HIT US!



AT FORTY KNOTS, THE STEEL HULLS OF THE TORPEDO BOATS RIPPED THROUGH THE CLOSTER OF LANDING CRAFT LIKE BULLETS.

ZEROS APPROACHING, SIR, FROM ASTERN!



BUT A NEW THREAT WAS EVEN NOW SCREAMING OUT OF THE OILY SMOKE OVER THE BURNING CITY. THREE ZERO FIGHTERS DIVED ON THE M.T.B.'S AS THEY CLEARED THE WRECKAGE OF THE LANDING CRAFT.

SAM'S IN TROUBLE! BRING YOUR GUNS TO BEAR ON THE ZEROS!



THE LEADING ZERO FLUNG ITSELF
VENGEFULLY ON M.T.B. 67. ITS
TWIN CANNONS SPURTING
LEADEN FLAME...



CANNON SHELLS RIPPED UP THE DECKS OF THE TORPEDO
BOAT, WRECKING ITS ENGINE ROOM. BUT THE PILOT OF
THE ZERO WAS NOT TO ENJOY HIS TRIUMPH FOR LONG.



THE PORT LEWIS GUN IMPALED THE JAPANESE
FIGHTER WITH A FLAMING ARROW OF
TRACER BULLETS.

Fire One



AS THE TOW ROPE WAS PASSED FROM M.T.B. 54, THE SECOND ZERO FIGHTER CAME IN ON ITS FIRING RUN. BUT ITS ATTACK WAS ERRATIC.

DON'T LIKE
YOUR RECEPTION,
EH, NIP?



THE FATE OF THEIR LEADER HAD GIVEN THE TWO ZEROS A HEALTHY RESPECT FOR THEIR SPITEFUL ADVERSARIES. AFTER TWO ABORTIVE ATTACKS THEY PEELED OFF AND FLEW BACK ACROSS THE CITY.



BEHIND THE WITHDRAWING M.T.B.'S, A BITTER YELLOW FIST SHOOK FROM THE WRECK-LITTERED SEA. AHEAD OF THEM, THE FUTURE WAS GRIM.

SIGNAL FROM BASE, SIR!
THINGS LOOK PRETTY ROCKY
THE DEPOT SHIP'S BEEN SUNK BY
BOMBING AND THE NAVAL
DOCKYARD'S BEEN OCCUPIED BY
THE JAPS!

LET'S
HAVE A LOOK,
SNOTTY!



DESPITE THE DOLEFUL NEWS IT GAVE, THE SIGNAL BROUGHT A GRIM SMILE TO LIEUTENANT PETER DICKINSON'S FACE. THERE WAS STILL FIGHTING TO BE DONE.

PROCEED TO
SAIPAN CREEK, EH?
SO THE C.O.'S NOT
GIVING UP YET,
BLESS HIM!



THE TWO LIMPING TORPEDO BOATS ROUNDED MOUNT DAVIS WITHOUT FURTHER MISHAP AND HEADED NORTH ALONG THE WOODED COAST. AN HOUR LATER...



FOUR TORPEDO BOATS WERE ALREADY SNUGLY BERTHED IN SAIPAN CREEK. FOLIAGE WAS BEING PLACED ON THEIR DECKS TO HIDE THEM FROM THE AIR.



AFTER SEEING TO HIS WOUNDED GUNNER AND SETTING HIS CREW TO CAMOUFLAGE THE CRAFT, PETER WENT ASHORE TO FIND THE C.O. OF THE FLOTILLA.

LIEUTENANT DICKINSON REPORTING, SIR!



THE COMMANDER LISTENED TO PETER'S REPORT AND CONGRATULATED HIM. THEN HE OUTLINED HIS PLAN FOR THE M.T.B. FLOTILLA'S FUTURE ACTION.

SO WE LIE UP HERE BY DAY AND HIT THE JAPS AT NIGHT, SIR? HOW LONG DO WE GO ON DOING THAT?

UNTIL H.Q. CONSIDER OUR USEFULNESS HERE IS AT AN END, DICKINSON! WE CAN'T SAVE THE COLONY, I'M AFRAID! THE JAPS HAVE OVERRUN IT ALREADY! BUT WE CAN MAKE THINGS HOT FOR THEIR SEA COMMUNICATIONS!



AS THE INTERVIEW ENDED, A SUDDEN THOUGHT STRUCK PETER.

BY THE WAY, SIR, HAVE YOU ANY NEWS OF THE PEOPLE IN THE CITY? ARE THE JAPS LETTING THEM CARRY ON?

YOU WORKED THERE, DIDN'T YOU, DICKINSON? WELL, THE LAST NEWS WE HAD WAS THAT THE JAPS WERE ROUNDING UP ALL BRITISH CIVILIANS. THERE'LL BE SOME COLLABORATORS, OF COURSE, THERE ALWAYS ARE. MORE I CAN'T TELL YOU!



WITH THAT UGLY WORD ECHOING IN HIS EARS, AND HIS MEMORY OF WHAT HARRY PATTON HAD SAID TO HIM THAT VERY MORNING. PETER DICKINSON HAD TO CLOSE HIS MIND TO THE BITTERNESS OF HIS THOUGHTS.

THERE'LL BE SOME COLLABORATORS, YES... MEN WHO THINK LIKE HARRY PATTON...



BACK ON M.T.B. 54, THE IRREPRESSIBLE MIDSHIPMAN WAS WAITING TO RELIEVE HIS SKIPPER'S GLOOM...

LOOKS PRETTY, DOESN'T SHE, SIR?

AS LONG AS THE ZEROS DON'T SPOT US, SNOTTY, SHE'S PRETTY ENOUGH FOR ME!



DURING THE DAYS WHICH FOLLOWED THE TINY FORCE OF HONG KONG VOLUNTEERS HID FROM THEIR SHARP-EYED ENEMY...

FOR THREE DAYS WE SEARCH. I KEEP TELLING THE COLONEL THERE ARE NO BRITISH TORPEDO BOATS ALONG THIS COAST AND HE ASKS ME ARE THEY GHOSTS WHICH SINK HIS LANDING CRAFT EVERY NIGHT. I DO NOT UNDERSTAND!



BUT EVERY NIGHT, AS THE SUN SANK BEHIND THE HILLS, THE FOLIAGE PILED ON THE SLIM CRAFT WAS DRAGGED ASIDE AND IN PAIRS THE TORPEDO BOATS WENT OUT TO HUNT ...

HALF AHEAD
STARBOARD!
AMIDSHIPS!

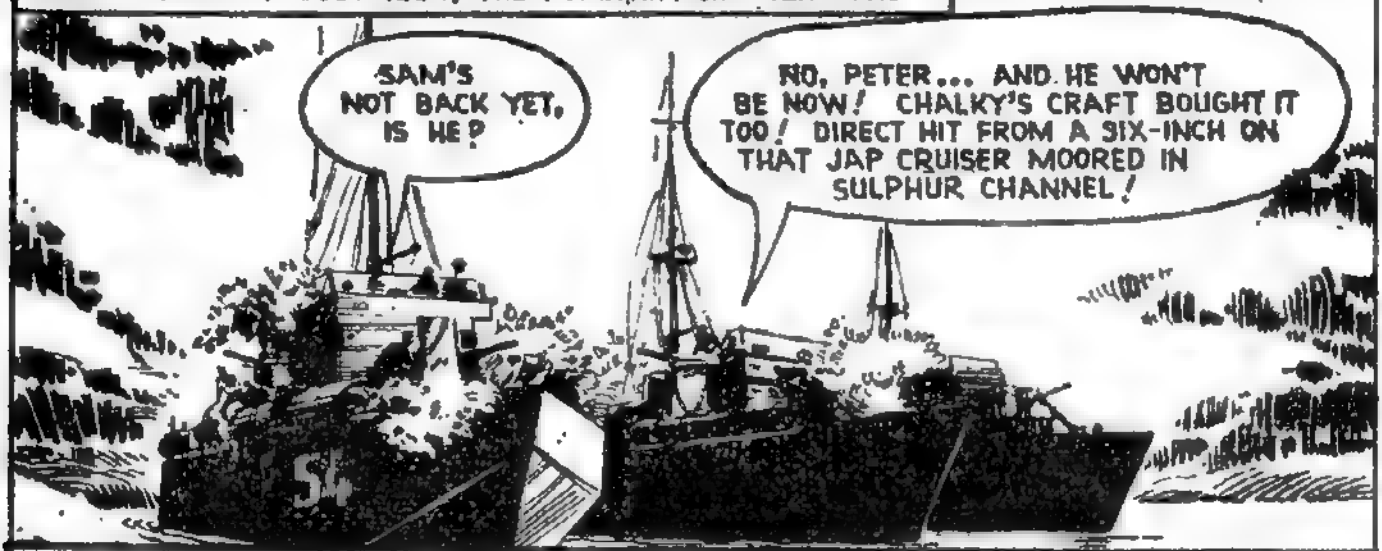


TO THE JAPANESE, THOSE FEW BRITISH TORPEDO BOATS WHICH ROARED OUT OF THE DARKNESS, GUNS BLAZING, WERE A SOURCE OF TERROR. EVERY NIGHT THEY CREATED HAVOC IN THE CROWDED SEA LANES OF THE CONQUERED CITY.



*Chapter 4.***UNDEFEATED**

BUT THE BRITISH LOSSES WERE HEAVY. AND THE STRAIN OF THOSE VIOLENT NIGHT ACTIONS, FOLLOWED BY DAYS OF AGONIZED HIDING, WAS SEVERE. ALL THROUGH THE EARLY WEEKS OF DECEMBER, THE FORLORN FIGHT WENT ON.



THEN, ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 1941, WHEN THE BULLET-SCARRED M.T.B.'S RETURNED TO THEIR HIDEOUT IN SAIPAN CREEK, THE ORDEAL SUDDENLY ENDED.



SILENTLY, GRIM-FACED, THE YOUNG VOLUNTEER OFFICERS FILED INTO THE C.O.'S TENT...

THE SIGNAL FROM H.Q. HAS COME, GENTLEMEN! 'GO ALL BOATS', IT SAYS! THAT MEANS THE END OF OUR LOSING BATTLE HERE IN THE COLONY! NOW LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT OUR COURSE OF ACTION IS!



THE COMMANDER OUTLINED HIS PLAN IN AN EXPRESSIONLESS VOICE...

TONIGHT WE TAKE OUR BOATS TO THIS POINT ALONG THE COAST AND SCUTTLE THEM! THERE ARE CHINESE GUERRILLAS OPERATING HERE, AND WE MUST HOPE TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THEM. WHETHER WE DO OR NOT, OUR ORDERS ARE TO CROSS THE JAP-HELD COASTLINE INTO FREE CHINA, AND TO MAKE OUR WAY THREE THOUSAND MILES OVERLAND TO RANGOON!



IT WAS A FANTASTIC JOURNEY WHICH LAY BEFORE THE YOUNG OFFICERS, BUT THEY ACCEPTED IT WITHOUT QUESTION.

I SUPPOSE IT'S BETTER THAT THE JAPS DON'T GET THEIR HANDS ON HER, BUT I SHALL HATE TO SCUTTLE GOOD OLD FIFTY-FOUR!

ME, TOO, PETER! TO SAY NOTHING OF A THREE THOUSAND MILE HIKE AFTERWARDS!

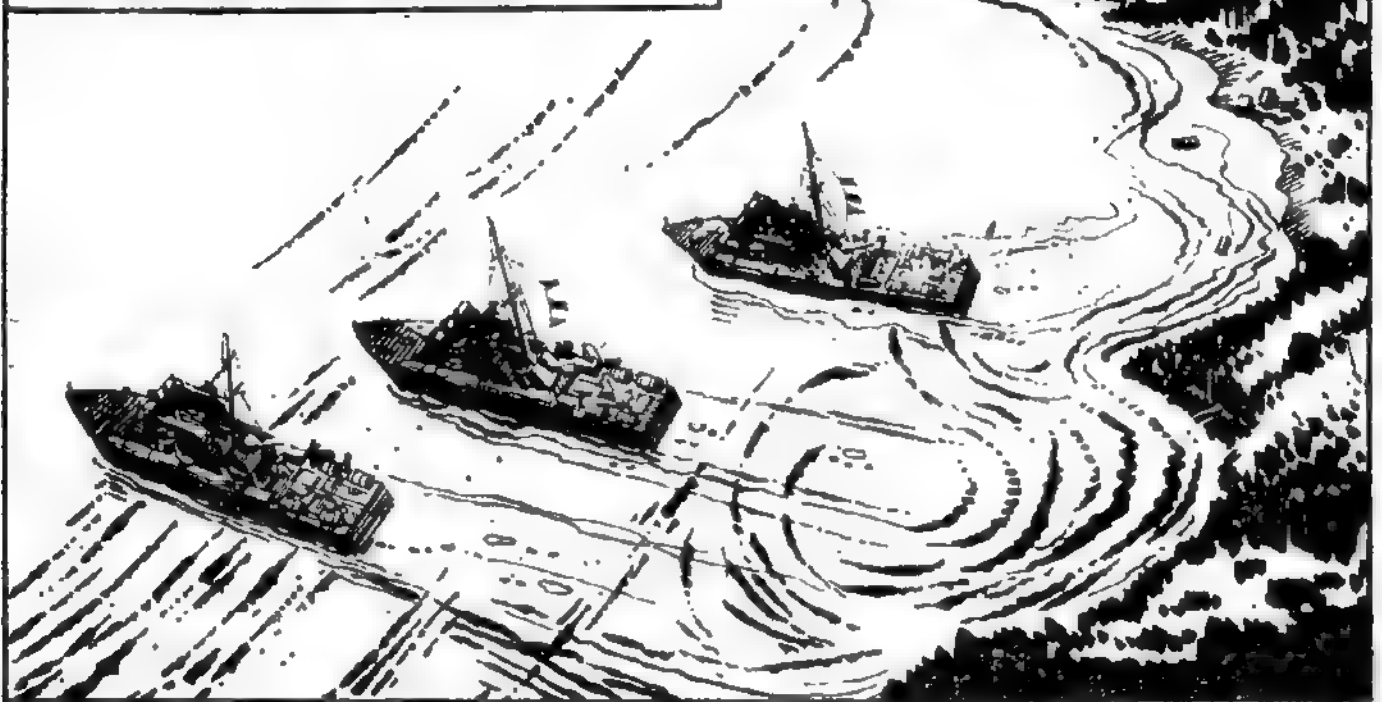


THAT NIGHT, THE PETROL DUMP ASHORE WAS POURED INTO THE CREEK. THE FOLIAGE WAS STRIPPED FROM THE DECKS FOR THE LAST TIME.

LET'S GO, GENTLEMEN!



AS DARKNESS FELL, THE HONG KONG FLOTILLA STEAMED OUT OF ITS HIDEOUT FOR THE LAST TIME. THE VOLUNTEERS HAD FOUGHT GALLANTLY AGAINST IMPOSSIBLE ODDS, AND NOW THE FIGHT WAS OVER.



AN HOUR AFTER THEY HAD PUT TO SEA PETER DICKINSON ON M.T. 8.54 ON THE PORT WING OF THE FLOTILLA SIGHTED A SHIP AHEAD. ITS SCUTTLES WERE UNSHADED IN THE USUAL SLIPSHOD JAP WAY...



THERE'S A JAP SHIP ON THE PORT BOW! MAKE A SIGNAL TO THE C.O. ON THE NIGHT LANTERN. 'MAY I SCORE ONE MORE FOR THE HONG KONG FLOTILLA'?

AYE AYE, SIR!

THE ALDIS LAMP FLICKERED STEALTHILY OVER THE TORPEDO BOAT'S SHELTERED WING. AS STEALTHILY, THE MESSAGE CAME BACK ACROSS THE SILENT WATERS...

C.O. MAKES "GO AHEAD, FIFTY-FOUR! GOOD HUNTING! REJOIN FLOTILLA AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE!"



HERE WE GO, THEN!

M.T.B. 54 SWUNG OUT OF FORMATION AND CLOSED WITH ITS SHADOWY TARGET. BUT THE SHARP EARS ON THE JAPANESE SHIP HAD HEARD THE BEAT OF ENGINES IN THE DARKNESS ASTERN.

BANZAI!
GET THE
TORPEDO
BOAT!



A STAR SHELL BURST OVERHEAD. THROUGH ITS GHOSTLY RADIANCE M.T.B. 54 RACED IN TO DEAL ITS LAST DEFIANT BLOW AT THE ENEMY.

TORPEDO
AWAY!



BEFORE THE JAPANESE GUNS COULD BEAR ON HER, THE SWIFT M.T.B. HAD STRUCK. HER TORPEDO LANCED INTO THE BLACK WATER, AND RAN TRUE TO ITS TARGET. TWENTY SECONDS LATER...



Fire One

RIPPED APART BY THAT HAMMERBLOW EXPLOSION, THE JAP SHIP HEeled OVER IN A TORMENT OF FLAME AND STEAM. MEN JUMPED FROM ITS SCALDING DECKS AND CRIED OUT IN THE GLARE-LIT WATER.



AMONG THOSE PITIFUL VOICES ONE HAD CAUGHT THE EAR OF THE YOUNG MIDSHIPMAN.



THE ENGLISHMAN WAS DRAGGED ON BOARD. PETER DICKINSON CLIMBED DOWN THE BRIDGE LADDER, AND LOOKED AT HIM, AND GASPED ...



THE YOUNG OFFICER'S FACE DARKENED AS HE STARED AT HIS FORMER BOSS. SUDDENLY IT WAS MERCILESSLY CLEAR TO HIM THAT HARRY PATTON WAS A TRAITOR. WHY ELSE SHOULD HE HAVE BEEN ON A JAPANESE SHIP?

I SUPPOSE YOU STILL CALL YOURSELF AN ENGLISHMAN! I CALL YOU A DIRTY COLLABORATOR, PATTON! YOU'VE BEEN OUT CRUISING WITH YOUR CHARMING JAP FRIENDS, I SUPPOSE! I WISH I'D LET YOU DROWN WITH THEM!



PATTON LISTENED TO THOSE BITTER WORDS WITHOUT ANSWERING, A FAINT SMILE FAR BACK IN HIS PAIN-FILLED EYES. THEN, WITHOUT A SOUND, HE SLUMPED FORWARD.

HE'S BLACKED OUT, SIR!

GET HIM BELOW! AND WATCH HIM!



WITH A MURDEROUS SICKNESS IN HIS HEART, PETER DICKINSON CLIMBED BACK TO THE BRIDGE. ALREADY THE JAPANESE SHIP HAD SUNK BELOW THE SURFACE, BUT HIS LAST VICTORY GAVE NO PLEASURE TO THE YOUNG OFFICER.

MAKE A SIGNAL, SNOTTY! 'MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.' AM REJOINING FLOTILLA.!



FOR A LONG TIME PETER STOOD AT THE RAIL IN THE DARKNESS REMEMBERING BITTERLY THE WORDS HARRY PATTON HAD USED THAT DAY IN HIS OFFICE AT HONG KONG. HOW COULD A MAN DO A THING LIKE THAT?



SICK BERTH ATTENDANT'S COMPLIMENTS, SIR, AND HE'D LIKE YOU TO LOOK AT THE SURVIVOR WE PICKED UP, SIR!

PATTON? I'VE SEEN ENOUGH OF HIM! OH, ALL RIGHT, THEN!

RELUCTANTLY, THE YOUNG OFFICER WENT BELOW. THE LAMP SHED A CLEAR WHITE LIGHT ON THE MAN LYING BENEATH IT, AND ON HIS NAKED BACK.



WHAT THE DEVIL'S HAPPENED TO HIM?

THE JAPS HAVE BEEN TORTURING HIM, SIR, THAT'S WHAT!

Fire One

SICK SHAME OVERWHELMED PETER DICKINSON. HE HAD ACCUSED THIS PITIFUL MAN OF COLLABORATING WITH THE DEVILS WHO HAD VICIOUSLY TORTURED HIM.



BUT NOW THERE WAS NO TIME FOR CONTRITION. THE HONG KONG FLOTILLA HAD MADE ITS LAST LANDFALL, AND A BITTER TASK MUST BE FULFILLED.



WHILE THE ENGINE ROOM ARTIFICER SMASHED THE ENGINES HE HAD TENDED FOR SO LONG, THE UNCONSCIOUS HARRY PATTON WAS BROUGHT ON DECK AND FLOATED ASHORE ON A DINGHY. WHEN ALL WAS READY ...

NOW FOR THE SEA COCKS! AT LEAST I'M SINKING THE FIFTY-FOUR MYSELF, AND THAT'S MORE THAN THE JAPS COULD DO!



SWIFTLY, PETER DICKINSON OPENED THE M.T.B.'S SEA COCKS AND DIVED OVERBOARD. CLIMBING ASHORE, HE TURNED TO SALUTE THE SHIP, WHICH HAD SERVED HIM SO WELL. M.T.B. 54 WAS GOING DOWN UNDEFEATED!



Chapter 5. THE LONG MARCH

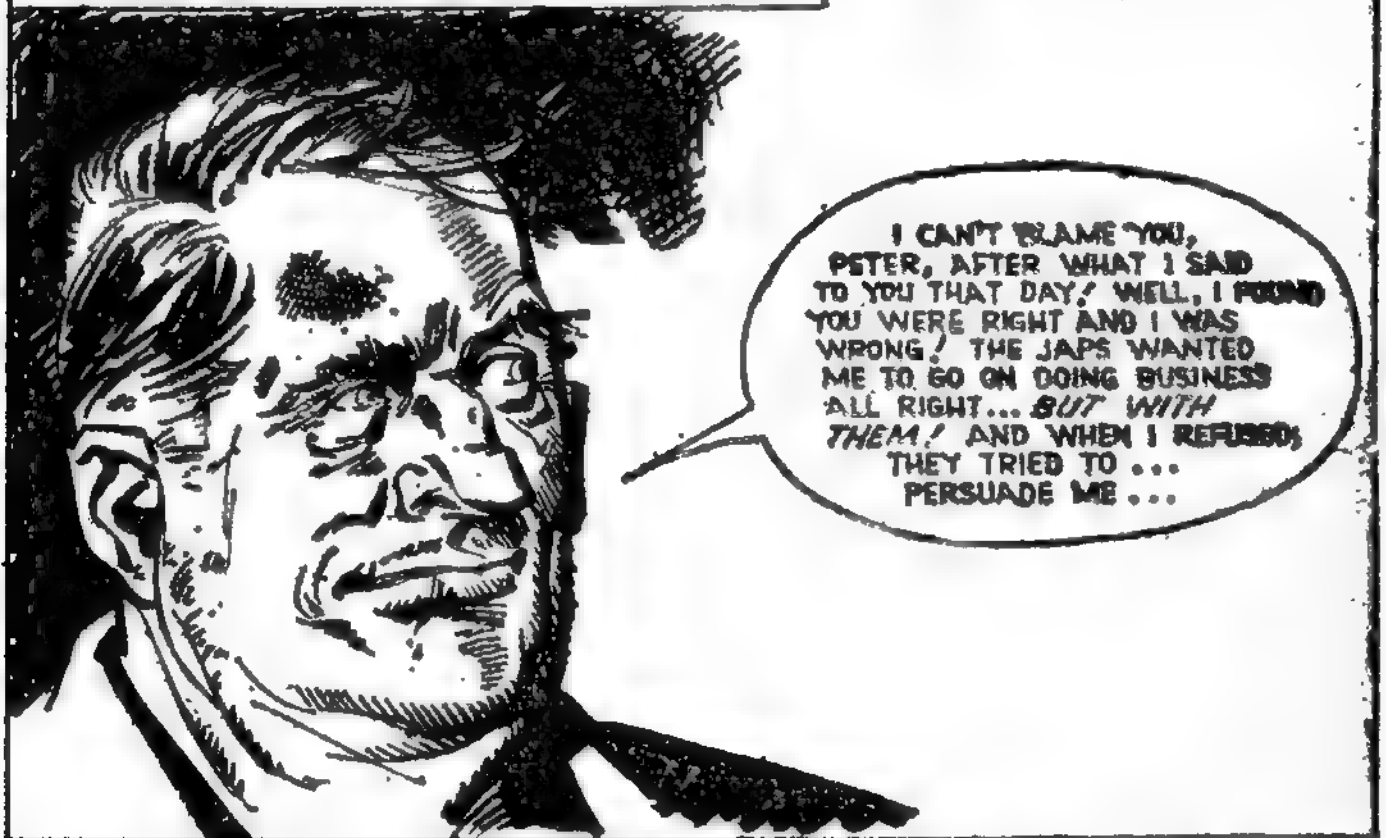
FOR A LONG MOMENT, PETER STOOD LOOKING AT THE SMOOTH WATER WHICH COVERED THE TORPEDO BOAT HE HAD SCUTTLED WITH HIS OWN HANDS. IT WAS A BITTER MOMENT. AND WHEN HE TURNED ...



HARRY PATTON HAD RECOVERED. HE GOT STIFFLY TO HIS FEET NOW, AND A HOT FLUSH OF SHAME SWEEPED OVER THE YOUNG OFFICER.



PETER DICKINSON'S APOLOGY WAS A POOR ONE, BUT IT WAS DEEPLY FELT, AND HARRY PATTON'S SMILE SHOWED THAT IT WAS ACCEPTED.



THE TOUGH YORKSHIREMAN'S STORY WAS SIMPLY TOLD, BUT BEHIND IT LAY A NIGHTMARE OF MENTAL AND PHYSICAL TORTURE.

THEY WERE TAKING ME TO THE SPECIAL PRISON CAMP ON HAIKO ISLAND WHEN YOU ARRIVED, PETER!

COME ON, LET'S GET MOVING! WE'VE A LONG WAY TO GO!



IN SINGLE FILE, THE SURVIVORS OF THE HONG KONG FLOTILLA SET OFF TO PENETRATE THE ENEMY-OCCUPIED COASTAL BELT. NOW THEY WERE NO LONGER THE HUNTERS ... *BUT THE HUNTED!*

KEEP CLOSE TOGETHER, MEN! THERE ARE JAP PATROLS ALL ALONG THIS COAST!



ON THE FIRST DAY'S MARCH THE SURVIVORS TWICE NEARLY STUMBLED ON JAPANESE PATROLS. THE RISKS WERE SO GREAT THAT THE COMMANDER ORDERED HIS MEN TO LIE HIDDEN DURING THE DAYLIGHT HOURS AND MARCH ONLY AT NIGHT.

OOH! MY POOR FEET!

MAKE THE MOST OF THE DAYLIGHT LIE-UPS, BOY! YOU'VE GOT A WEEK MORE OF THIS BEFORE WE REACH WEI-CHOW IN FREE CHINA!



THE GOING WAS HARD FOR THESE MEN WHOSE LIVES HAD BEEN SPENT ON THE SEA :
FOR SIX NIGHTS THEY MARCHED ON THROUGH THE PITILESS BUSH. EXHAUSTION
BEGAN TO TAKE ITS TOLL :



DURING THE HALT ON THE SEVENTH NIGHT,
DISCONTENTED VOICES GAVE WORDS TO A
COMMON DESPONDENCY...



COR, I'VE ABOUT
HAD IT ! AND WE'VE GOT
THREE THOUSAND MILES
TO DO YET !

THE TREK THAT NIGHT SHOULD BE THE LAST BEFORE THEY REACHED WEI-CHOW, ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDER'S CALCULATIONS. BUT THE MEN'S IRON DISCIPLINE WAS BEGINNING TO RELAX. THEY WERE MAKING TOO MUCH NOISE.



AT MIDNIGHT ON THAT LAST NIGHT, THE INEVITABLE HAPPENED. SHARP EARS ON THE WOODED SLOPE ABOVE THE TRACK PICKED UP AN INCAUTIOUS COUGH AND THE SOUND OF A MAN STUMBLING — SLIT EYES NARROWED!



THE ATTACK CAME WITH STUNNING SUDDENNESS. THE SHRILL VOICES, THE WHINING BULLETS DAZED THE EXHAUSTED BRITISH BLUEJACKETS ...

'BANZAI!'

FIGHT,
MEN,
FIGHT.!



AHEAD OF THE LINE, AND WITHIN REACH OF SAFETY IN THE DARK JUNGLE, PETER AND THE LEADING RATINGS PAUSED FOR A SINGLE, INDECISIVE MOMENT. AND IT WAS HARRY PATTON WHO ROUSED THEM.

JAPS, PETER, JAPS!
COME ON!



RECALLED TO THEIR FIGHTING SENSES BY THE FURIOUS YORKSHIREMAN, THE SAILORS ON THE PATH SWEEPED BACK INTO THE CLEARING BEHIND BLAZING GUNS. THE JAPS TURNED IN PANIC.

ALL RIGHT,
YOU DEVILS,
FIGHT!



PETER AND HARRY PATTON HAD TRAVELLED A HARD ROAD THROUGH BITTER EXPERIENCE AND PAIN TO FIGHT AS THEY FOUGHT NOW, BACK TO BACK. . . .



THE FIGHT WAS SWIFT AND BLOODY. NO QUARTER WAS GIVEN. THIS WAS A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL. AT LAST...

WELL DONE, MEN! THESE JAPS WON'T TROUBLE US AGAIN!

THIS ONE MIGHT, SIR! I CAN'T JUST... KILL HIM!





GRIM EYES TURNED TO HARRY PATTON AT THE COMMANDER'S QUESTION. ON HIS EXPERIENCE OF THE FAR EAST DEPENDED THE LIVES OF THIRTY DESPERATE MEN.



CARRYING THEIR WOUNDED, THE DEPLETED PARTY OF SAILORS RESUMED THEIR STARKLY-INTERRUPTED MARCH. BUT PETER DICKINSON FOR ONE WAS NOT CONFIDENT OF THEIR CHANCES AT REACHING SAFETY.

I THOUGHT BACK IN HONG KONG YOU'D LEARNED THAT YOU CAN'T DO BUSINESS WITH THE JAPS, MISTER PATTON!

IN THE COLONY I HAD NOTHING TO BARGAIN WITH PETER MY BOY, NOW I HAVE ... THIS JAP'S LIFE! AND HE KNOWS IT!

THE TOUGH YORKSHIREMAN HAD LEARNED MUCH IN THE SICKENING DAYS SINCE THE FALL OF HONG KONG, BUT HE HAD NOT LOST FAITH IN HIS OWN JUDGEMENT. AN HOUR LATER CAME THE ACID TEST...

WHO GOES THERE?

BEYOND THE SCREEN OF TREES THE JAPANESE SOLDIER SENSED A MOVEMENT OF MEN AND STEEL. SUDDENLY THE BUSHES PARTED.

WHAT IS YOUR UNIT?

FOURTH KIBUSHI FOOT!
OUR PATROL RETURNS
FROM NIGHT DUTY AT
THE HILL STATION!



THE GRINNING JAPANESE SOLDIER ANSWERED THE CHALLENGE OF THE SENTRY GLIBLY. HIS BACK WAS TO THE WALL OF LEAVES AND HARD AS DEATH ITSELF AGAINST HIS BACK WAS A GUN.

YOU HAVE
THE JITTERS,
FRIEND. NO?

HOLD YOUR TONGUE, DOG!
REJOIN YOUR PATROL! THERE
ARE BRITISH BANDITS AT LARGE
WHO WILL SHOOT YOU IF
YOU LOITER!



SCOWLING, THE GUARD TURNED AWAY. HARRY PATTON'S RISK HAD PAID OFF! WITH A NEW SPRING IN THEIR STEP, THE TORPEDO BOAT CREWS HURRIED ON TOWARDS SAFETY.

CHINESE GUERILLAS APPROACHING, MEN! WE'RE THROUGH!



AN HOUR'S MARCHING HAD BROUGHT THE PARTY TO THE BROAD HIGHWAY LEADING TO WEI-CHOW. AT LAST THE WEARY MEN HAD COMPLETED THE FIRST AND MOST DANGEROUS STAGE OF THEIR LONG JOURNEY TO BURMA.

I HAVE BEEN WARNED OF YOUR COMING BY MY SUPERIORS, ENGLISHMAN! I WILL ESCORT YOUR MEN TO WEI-CHOW. NOW YOU ARE IN FREE CHINA!



ESCORTED BY THE CHINESE GUERRILLA FIGHTERS, THE TORPEDO BOAT CREWS MARCHED IN HIGH SPIRITS TOWARD THE CITY.



THE TATTERED SURVIVORS OF THE LOST BATTLE FOR HONG KONG WERE GIVEN A GREAT WELCOME BY THE PEOPLE OF WEI-CHOW. BUT A HARD JOURNEY LAY AHEAD OF THEM.



ARMED WITH THE MEAGRE SUPPLY OF BANKNOTES THE COMMANDER HAD SALVED IN THE ESCAPE FROM THE COLONY, PETER WENT INTO THE CROWDED BAZAARS.



THE SKIPPER'S BETTER AT FIGHTING THAN SHOPPING, IF YOU ASK ME!

ALMOST EMPTY HANDED, THE CRESTFALLEN LIEUTENANT REPORTED TO THE COMMANDER AT DAWN THE NEXT MORNING.



WELL, LIEUTENANT, WHERE ARE THE STORES?

THE LOCALS JUST WON'T PART WITH THEM, SIR. NOT FOR THE SORT OF MONEY WE'VE GOT! THEY MUST THINK WE'RE MILLIONAIRES OR SOMETHING!

SIR, COME AND LOOK AT THIS, SIR!

DRAWN TO A SIDESTREET BY THE EXCITED MIDSHIPMAN, PETER AND THE COMMANDER GAPED. HARRY PATTON HAD NO MONEY, BUT WHAT HE HAD GOT WAS A QUICK MIND AND A READY TONGUE.

WELL, I'M JIGGERED!

STORES FOR THE HONG KONG VOLUNTEERS, COMMANDER, AND THEY WON'T COST YOU A PENNY! I RECKON THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL HONOUR A NOTE SIGNED BY YOU, WON'T THEY?

THE YOUNG VOLUNTEER AND HIS FORMER BOSS WERE TOGETHER NOW AT THE START OF THE LONG ROAD TO VICTORY. AND PETER HAD A FEELING THEY WOULD STILL BE TOGETHER AT THE END.

THERE'S A TIME FOR FIGHTING AND A TIME FOR BUSINESS, PETER BOY, AS WE'VE BOTH FOUND OUT! THE SOONER THESE BOOTS GET US TO RANGOON, THE SOONER WE FINISH THE FIGHTING AND GET BACK TO HONG KONG AND THE BUSINESS!



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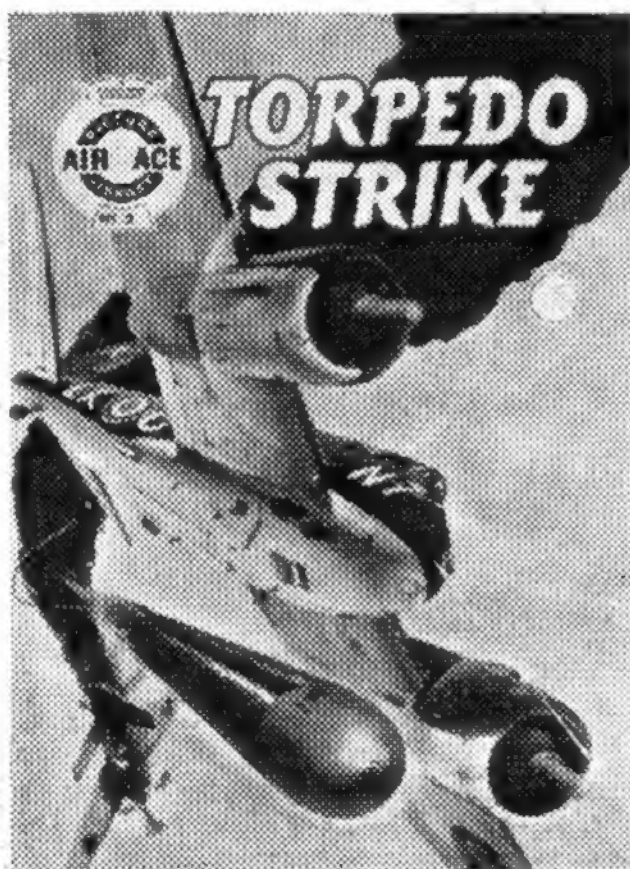
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